

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2620
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
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AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
SECDEF WASHDC
CINCUSNAVEUR
COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 1349

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR MPOL MU US
SUBJECT: COMIDEASTFOR'S AUDIENCE WITH SULTAN QABOOS

REF: MUSCAT 1342

1. SUMMARY. SULTAN OF OMAN TOLD COMIDEASTFOR THAT US NAVY VISITS ARE WELCOMED AND INDICATED HE CONSIDERS THIS TYPE OF AMERICAN PRESENCE A HEALTHY BALANCE TO SOVIET ACTIVITIES. HE SAID OMAN LIKES TO HAVE ITS FRIENDS AROUND. COMMENTING ON ADMIRAL CROWE'S DESCRIPTION OF MIDEASTFOR ACTIVITIES AND STATUS OF ITS PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN, SULTAN QABOOS SAID HE HOPED MIDEASTFOR WOULD BE ABLE TO STAY. HE ACCEPTED AN INVITATION TO VISIT THE USS DUPONT IN MUSCAT'S OUTER HARBOR. (THE VISIT, FIRST EVER BY HIM TO A VISITING FOREIGN WARSHIP, TOOK PLACE OCTOBER 28.)

2. RADM CROWE, HIS FLAG SECRETARY AND AIDE WERE RECEIVED
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BY SULTAN QABOOS AT HIS MUSCAT PALACE FOR ABOUT 20 MIN-

UTES ON OCTOBER 27. ALSO PRESENT WERE AMBASSADOR WOLLE, LT. COL. SALIM AL-GHAZALI (SULTAN'S LIAISON OFFICER IN MOD), AND CAPT. HARRY MUCKLOW (COMMANDER. SULTAN OF OMAN'S NAVY WHO IS SECONDED FROM BRITISH NAVY). AUDIENCE HAD BEEN SCHEDULED ON OMANI INITIATIVE TEN DAYS BEFORE.

3. HM WELCOMED THE ADMIRAL WITH AN OMANI TV CAMERS TEAM RECORDING THE OCCASION. HE HOPED HIS PEOPLE AND ESPECIALLY HIS NAVY WERE PROVIDING EVERY POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE FOR ADMIRAL CROWE AND THE VISITING USS DUPONT. THE ADMIRAL ASSURED HIM THIS WAS SO AND EXPRESSED THANKS. HM STATED HE WAS PLEASED TO HAVE US NAVAL VISITS BECAUSE OMAN LIKES TO SEE ITS FRIENDS; THE OMANI PEOPLE APPRECIATE THIS AND FEEL BETTER BECAUSE OF IT. ADMIRAL CROWE POINTED TO THE USEFULNESS OF SHIP VISITS IN TERMS OF EDUCATING OUR OWN PEOPLE: THE EXPERIENCE OF SEEING DISTANT PLACES AND MEETING OTHERS MAKES A DEEP IMPACT ON THE YOUNG AMERICAN OFFICERS AND MEN, AND THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT IN THEIR HOME COMMUNITIES IS EXTENSIVE.

4. ADMIRAL CROWE EXPRESSED DEEP GRATITUDE FOR ARRANGEMENTS VOLUNTEERED BY LT. COL. AL-GHAZALI FOR A TRIP LATER IN THE DAY TO THE JABAL AKHDAR REGION IN THE SULTAN'S PERSONAL HELICOPTER. HE ALSO SAID HE WAS GREATLY IMPRESSED BY THE PICTURESQUE LOCATION OF MUSCAT, BY ALL THE CONSTRUCTION WORKS IN THE CAPITAL AREA, AND BY THE GENERAL AIR OF "MARCHING FORWARD". THERE WAS REFERENCE TO THE LONG TRADITION OF PAINTING NAMES OF VISITING NAVAL SHIPS ON THE ROCKY HILLS GUARDING MUSCAT HARBOR, WITH THE SULTAN COMMENTING THAT NOWADAYS WITH MOST SHIPS USING NEW HARBOR AT MATRAH THEY OFTEN DON'T SEE THIS HISTORIC REGISTER OF VESSELS. HM MADE CLEAR THAT THE CONTINUATION OF THIS PAINTING PRACTICE BY VISITING WARSHIPS HAS HIS APPROVAL.

5. REPLYING TO THE AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION ABOUT HIS RECENT OVERLAND JOURNEY FROM SALALAH TO MUSCAT, THE SULTAN SAID HE HAD TAKEN FIVE DAYS FOR THE TRIP BECAUSE THE PEOPLE HAVE COME TO EXPECT AN ANNUAL VISIT. IT IS A CHANCE FOR THEM TO SPEAK THEIR MINDS AND FOR HIM TO ASSESS WHETHER, AS HE HOPES, THE PROGRESS OF THE COUNTRY

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GENERALLY IS BEING FELT IN THEIR LIVES.

6. HM NOTED THAT THIS PART OF THE MIDDLE EAST/INDIAN OCEAN REGION IS BEING SUBJECTED TO MANY DIFFERENT INFLUENCES, AND THAT SOME ARE BAD. IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT A CERTAIN POWER HISTORICALLY HAS WANTED TO EXTEND ITS INFLUENCE INTO THIS AREA, AND STILL IS ACTIVELY PURSUING ITS GOALS. ADMIRAL CROWE SAID HE AGREED WITH THIS, AND THAT IT DOES NOT SEEM THE RIGHT TIME

FOR THE US NAVY TO END A STAY OF OVER 25 YEARS AT BAHRAIN FACILITIES. AS OMAN WAS AWARE, HOWEVER, THE BAHRAIN GOVERNMENT HAS SUGGESTED THE USN PRESENCE BE PHASED OUT IN 1977. CONSULTATIONS WITH BAHRAIN WERE CONTINUING, BUT HE WAS NOT SANGUINE THAT AN AGREEMENT FOR REMAINING WOULD BE REACHED. THE ADMIRAL EXPLAINED THE WAYS IN WHICH MIDEASTFOR ASSISTS FRIENDLY NAVAL FORCES BY PROVIDING TRAINING AND CONUDCTING JOINT EXERCISES, SIMPLE OR COMPLEX DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION. HE MENTIONED THE EXTENSIVE TRAINING PROGAM WITH SAUDI ARABI AND CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH IRAN, AND THE PRACTICE OF TAKING SAILORS, OCCASIONALLY OMANIS, ABOARD USN SHIPS FOR SHORT PERIODS OF TIME.

7. SULTAN QABOOS SAID HE HOPED MIDEASTFOR WOULD BE ABLE TO STAY. AFTER ALL, HE WENT ON, "THE OTHERS" HAVE THEIR SHIPS AND MEN CONSTANTLY IN THE AREA, SO WHY SHOULD BAHRAIN AND OMAN, FOR EXAMPLE, BE CRITICIZED FOR HAVING THEIR FREINDS HERE? IT IS AS SIMPLE AS THAT, HE SAID.

8. ADMIRAL CROWE INVITED THE SULTAN TO VISIT OR TAKE A RIDE ON MIDEASTFOR SHIPS AT ANY TIME AND EXTENDED A SPECIFIC INVITATION TO VISIT THE USS DUPONT CURRENTLY IN PORT. HM RESPONDED HE WOULD LIKE TO VISIT THE DUPONT AND SUGGESTED THE FOLLOWING MORNING AT 9:00. THE ADMIRAL SAID HE CONSIDERED THIS A GREAT HONOR, AS WOULD THE CAPTAIN, OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE DUPONT.

9. COMMENT. BEFORE THE AUDIENCE, ADMIRAL CROWE, CMDR. COLLIS OF THE DUPONT AND THE AMBASSADOR HAD DECIDED TO EXTEND THE INVITATION (PARA 8) TO HM IF LT. COL. AL-GHAZALI CONSIDERED IT IN ORDER TO DO SO. THE AMBASSADOR PUT THIS TO GHAZALI ON ARRIVAL AT THE PALACE; HE CHECKED IT OUT WITH THE SULTAN AND A FEW MINUTES LATER TOLD US THAT AN INVITATION WOULD BE WELCOMED AND WOULD BE ACCEPTED FOR THE NEXT MORNING. THE VISITS TO MUSCAT
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OF COMIDEASTFOR AND THE DUPONT BOTH WERE EXTENDED A FEW HOURS TO ENABLE HM'S SHIP VISIT TO TAKE PLACE.

10. FURTHER COMMENT. THERE WAS NO MENTION OF MASIRAH DURING AUDIENCE, OR IN OTHER COMIDEASTFOR MEETINGS WITH OMANI OFFICIALS.
WOLLE

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